

- It is part of our human nature to worship something greater than ourselves. We are hard-wired, if you will, to honor and venerate that which we believe to be divine. As Christians, of course, we worship and honor our Trinitarian God.
- But in the Roman Empire, which is the cultural milieu in which our Faith was born and got its start, they had their own pantheon of gods that citizens were often required to honor. The refusal to honor the so-called gods of Rome led to the deaths of so many of our early martyrs.
- One such martyr of our faith is the saint whose feast is celebrated today in the Novus Ordo calendar: my own patron, St. Timothy. St. Timothy was the close disciple and travel companion of St. Paul, and he eventually ended up as the bishop of Ephesus.
- St. Timothy was martyred there in the year 97, at the ripe old age of 80, for not only refusing to pay homage to the Roman gods, but for also disrupting a procession in honor of the goddess Diana by his preaching of the Gospel.
- Coming courageously before the angry pagans armed only with the Word of truth, Timothy was beaten with clubs, dragged through the city streets, and eventually stoned to death.
- Like every other martyr of our glorious Catholic faith, St. Timothy knew it was better to lay down his life rather than worship something false.
- So that we might give proper honor and worship to our Triune God, Pope Francis has declared this year, 2025, to be a Jubilee Year, which usually happens about every 25 years.
- A Jubilee Year is an "event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church." Pope Francis has designated the 2025 Holy Year as a time to renew ourselves as "Pilgrims of Hope."
- The concept of "Jubilee" is rooted in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Leviticus, which describes a Jubilee as a special year of reconciliation, pilgrimage, and homecoming: a time meant to restore man to the original state God intends for us.
- In short, a Jubilee year is a holy time set aside to enter more deeply into God. In this way, the Jubilee year should help us cultivate a better a sense of the Sabbath. Truly, we cannot understand a jubilee year such as this without a proper understanding of the Sabbath.
- The Sabbath isn't just about getting proper rest and recreation. While these things are vitally important to our health, the Sabbath is primarily directed toward better appreciating and meditating upon the mysteries of our Faith.
- The importance of the Sabbath is attested to by the fact that we have a commandment from God to keep holy the Sabbath. It is a day of solemn rest that is holy to the Lord, bringing everyday work to a halt.
- The Sabbath provides time for recreation and leisure that not only gives rest, but that also renders us more capable of meditating on God so that we might know and love Him better.
- Contemplating our Lord gives us a foretaste of the eternity we all desire in the depths of our souls, and it helps us to draw closer in union with Him, to experience intimacy with Him. Most importantly, it gives us joy!
- Our first reading and Gospel today turn our minds toward the Sabbath and the joy it naturally produces. Nehemiah tells us in the first reading today: "Today is the holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep, . . . for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength."
- Moreover, when we turn to today's Gospel, we see our Lord going to the synagogue on the Sabbath and proclaiming His message of glad tidings, a message of joy.

- Jesus tells us that He has been anointed “to bring glad tidings to the poor”, “to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”
- Very sadly, our society has largely lost sight of an understanding of sabbath or jubilee as our world has become more secular and our Faith has been dumbed down through poor liturgy and catechesis.
- Yet, the sabbath is of primordial importance because it is a sign of our covenant with God. God has commanded that we keep the sabbath as part of our covenantal agreement with Him so that we might find the rest we need to be attentive to Him and the demands of our Faith.
- Look at our society and how we value workaholicism, how we so often assign dignity to people by what they produce or accomplish.
- How many Catholics fail in their Sunday Mass obligation, which is at the very heart of observing the Sabbath and contemplating God, because they feel too tired or have other obligations? That’s messed up!
- It’s precisely why we need this Jubilee Year: to recover our sense of the Sabbath, to enter more deeply into the mystery of God, to be reconciled with God and with one another, and to recover the dignity that we’ve lost through an increasingly secular society.
- When our Lord established the Jubilee system with the Jewish people so long ago, He in part wanted to test their faith in Him, and to see if they would be obedient and come to love Him more through their observance of Jubilees.
- In the same way, this Jubilee Year gives us an opportunity to recalibrate our lives and deepen our faith in God, our hope in Him, and our love for Him. It’s a time for us to learn to be better stewards of our gifts, but we must take this concept of Sabbath seriously.
- So many of us really put more trust in our own efforts and work than we do in God’s generosity. We end up working on Sunday because we think that, if we don’t, we just won’t get things done or be able to provide for our families.
- But I really think that if we put our trust in God by seeking to be fully obedient to Him and to the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment, He will pour out His generosity on us in abundance.
- I know this is certainly true with regard to tithing. When we are faithful to giving God at least 10% of our gross income, especially when that’s a stretch for us financially, God always provides. He always makes sure we have enough to take care of our needs.
- So, as we delve into this Jubilee Year, my challenge to you is to celebrate it by taking the Sabbath seriously and by being generous stewards of all that God has given you. For this year is a time to learn how to trust God better.
- Make Sunday a day of recreation, rest, and prayer. Invest in God and in your family by spending time with them and not worrying about your work. At the same time, give some thought to your stewardship, and not just time, talent, and treasure, but also your fertility.
- Are you giving back to God what you should financially, or are you overly concerned with your own comfort and security? Do you trust God to provide? Are you giving of your time and talent as you should, or do you hold back for fear of not having enough time?
- Are you being both generous and prudent with having kids, or are you using contraception?
- This Jubilee Year calls us to be “Pilgrims of Hope”, but we can only hope in God if we know Him well and trust in His providence. So let’s all make more time for God; let’s all enter more deeply into the mystery of God this year.
- And let us trust that He will be abundantly generous to us in return. St. Timothy, pray for us!